

Diet & Health Study News

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Dear Participant,

The NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study has just celebrated its 20th Anniversary, thanks to your continued participation. In 1995, over 500,000 people, including you, completed the very first questionnaire, making this one of the largest long-term studies to look at the relationship between lifestyle factors, such as diet and exercise, and cancer among older Americans.

Though you have not received a questionnaire from us in a while you are still making important contributions to the study! Every few years we work with state cancer registries to find who has developed cancer. Results from our analysis of that information have been published in over 250 articles in scientific journals. Some have received a great deal of attention among scientists, the media, and the public. A few of our recent articles are highlighted in this newsletter.

Without your participation, this critical research on diet and health would not be possible. Please feel free to contact us with any questions you have about the study. Remember you can get up-to-date information at the study website <http://dietandhealth.cancer.gov/>.

Thank you for your continued participation in the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study!

Coffee Drinking and Your Health



Millions of people drink coffee and many wonder if doing so has an effect on their health. In the Spring 2012 newsletter we described the first study results about coffee drinking. Participants who were coffee drinkers when they joined the study were less likely to die from heart disease, respiratory disease, stroke, injuries and accidents, diabetes, and infections, compared to participants who did not drink coffee. This pattern was not observed for deaths due to cancer. More recently, researchers have looked at the link between coffee drinking and certain types of cancer, specifically pancreatic and skin cancer.

In the past, drinking coffee was thought to increase the risk of pancreatic cancer. This idea has been overturned now, with many large studies suggesting no increased risk from drinking coffee. Researchers using data from the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study confirmed there was no connection between drinking coffee and an increased risk of pancreatic cancer. It didn't matter if the coffee was caffeinated or decaffeinated. The large number of participants in this study meant that twice the number of pancreatic cancer cases could be analyzed compared to any other study, which added to the strength of these results.

Skin cancer is one of the most common types of cancer in the United States. Protecting your skin from the sun's ultraviolet rays is the best way to reduce the risk of developing skin cancer. Researchers wanted to look at other risk factors for skin cancer such as drinking coffee. Coffee contains cancer-fighting-compounds, including caffeine that may reduce the risk of some cancers. Using study data, they found that participants who drank the most caffeinated coffee (four cups or more a day), compared to those who drank one or fewer cups per day, had a slightly lower risk of developing a certain type of skin cancer called malignant melanoma, which is the most serious type of skin cancer.

Since 90% of the participants drank coffee when the study began, expect to see more about coffee drinking and health from the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study!

Freedman ND, Park Y, Abnet CC, Hollenbeck A, Sinha R. Association of coffee drinking with total and cause-specific mortality. N Engl J Med 2012; 366:20:1891-1903.

Loffield E, Freedman ND, Graubard BI, Hollenbeck AR, Shebl FM, Mayne ST, Sinha R. Coffee Drinking and Cutaneous Melanoma Risk in the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study. J Natl Cancer Inst;2015:107(2).

Guertin KA, Freedman ND, Loffield E, Stolzenberg-Solomon RZ, Graubard BI, Sinha R. A prospective study of coffee intake and pancreatic cancer: results from the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study. British Journal of Cancer;2015: 113, 1081-1085.

Following Cancer Prevention Guidelines Reduces Risk of Developing Cancer

There are a number of health guidelines recommended for the prevention of cancer. The American Cancer Society advises maintaining a healthy body weight, being moderately to vigorously physically active, making healthy dietary choices, and limiting alcohol intake. These guidelines were developed based on years of research. Does adhering to guidelines like these really help prevent cancer?

In our study, participants who closely followed all four of the guidelines had an overall reduced risk of having cancer, compared to those who only followed some of the guidelines. Among the participants who developed cancer, those who followed the guidelines were less likely to die at an earlier age compared to those who didn't follow the guidelines. The researchers concluded that adherence to cancer prevention guidelines provided a health benefit to those who followed them closely.

Kabat GC, Matthews CE, Kamensky V, Hollenbeck AR, and Rohan TE. Adherence to cancer prevention guidelines and cancer incidence, cancer mortality, and total mortality: a prospective cohort study. Am J Clin Nutr 2015;101:558-69.



Want to find out more? You can find more information about these and other NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study research findings on the website at <http://dietandhealth.cancer.gov/publications.html>



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